DARK HORSE MANGA
BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL
98
$2.99US
TWILIGHT 3 OF 3
HIROAKI SAMURA
BLADE
OF THE IMMORTAL
DIRECT SALES

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story by

HIROAKI SAMURA

translation by

DANA LEWIS

lettering and retouch by

TOMOKO SAITO

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MANJI

Immortal *rōnin*, vowed to protect Rin and aid her in her quest for revenge

RIN

Last heir of the Mutenichi-*ryū dōjō* destroyed by the Ittō-*ryū*. seeks Anotsu's death

ANOTSU

The leader of the Ittō-*ryū* sword school

GIICHI

Mugai-*ryū* head collector

HYAKURIN

Assassin for the shadowy Mugai-*ryū* recovering from severe injuries

HABAKI KAGIMURA

Manipulative Mugai-*ryū* leader, serving the Shogun

THE STORY SO FAR

Infected by *kessenchu*, mystical bloodworms which can heal all wounds and grant their host immortality, Manji's bloodthirst led to the capture and murder of his sister. To atone for this and for the 100 innocent people who died at his hand while he served a corrupt lord, Manji vowed to slay 1,000 evil men in exchange for the release of death.

Giichi seeks to free Hyakurin from her service as a Mugai-*ryū* assassin. To do this, he must either convince Manji to join the Mugai-*ryū* ... or take his life. Eager for a confrontation, Manji refuses to join, resulting in a face-off between these former allies.

designer DEBRA BAILEY editor PHILIP SIMON publisher MIKE RICHARDSON

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Blade of the Immortal #98, February 2005. Published by Dark Horse Comics, Inc., 10956 SE Main Street, Milwaukie, OR 97222. Blade of the Immortal © 2005 by Hiroaki Samura. All rights reserved. First published in Japan in 2002 by Kodansha Ltd., Tokyo. English translation rights arranged through Kodansha Ltd. This English-language edition copyright © 2005 Dark Horse Comics, Inc. All other material unless otherwise specified copyright © 2005 Dark Horse Comics, Inc. All rights reserved. No portion of this publication may be reproduced by any means without written permission from the copyright holders. The stories, characters, and incidents in this publication are entirely fictional. Dark Horse Comics® is a trademark of Dark Horse Comics, Inc., registered in various categories and countries. All rights reserved. PRINTED IN CANADA

無限の住人

TWILIGHT
-part three-

RUUUU!
YOU'RE CAUGHT.

KRK KRK
KRAAK
FRIGGIN'... HURTS!
I DON'T LIKE LONG FIGHTS...
...AND GETTING HERE TOOK FAR TOO LONG.
I'VE NEVER RELEASED AN ENEMY ALIVE.

MANJI, LISTEN UP.
WASTING YOUR LIFE, PLEDGING YOUR LIFE? IT'S THE SAME.
IF YOU'RE READY TO WASTE IT, THEN WHY NOT OFFER IT... TO THE MUGAI-RYŪ?

COME WITH ME!
I'LL SET YOU FREE.

SET ME FREE? HEY, COME ON...

WOULD THE MUGAI-RYŪ TAKE A WIMP WHO'D AGREED TO THAT?
THIS OUTTA... WORK...
NO CHOICE, THEN...
DIE...

HENK!

GUGAH!

GLASS
HAIEEE YAH!

SHIT!

.....
.....!
KRAK!
KRRKKK
NUGACHH!!!
SHRRRTCH!

NO FRIGGIN'... JOKE... BLOODY HELL...
UNGN...
SRWNG

SRAK
KYAH
HAIEE YAH!

FWAP
!!

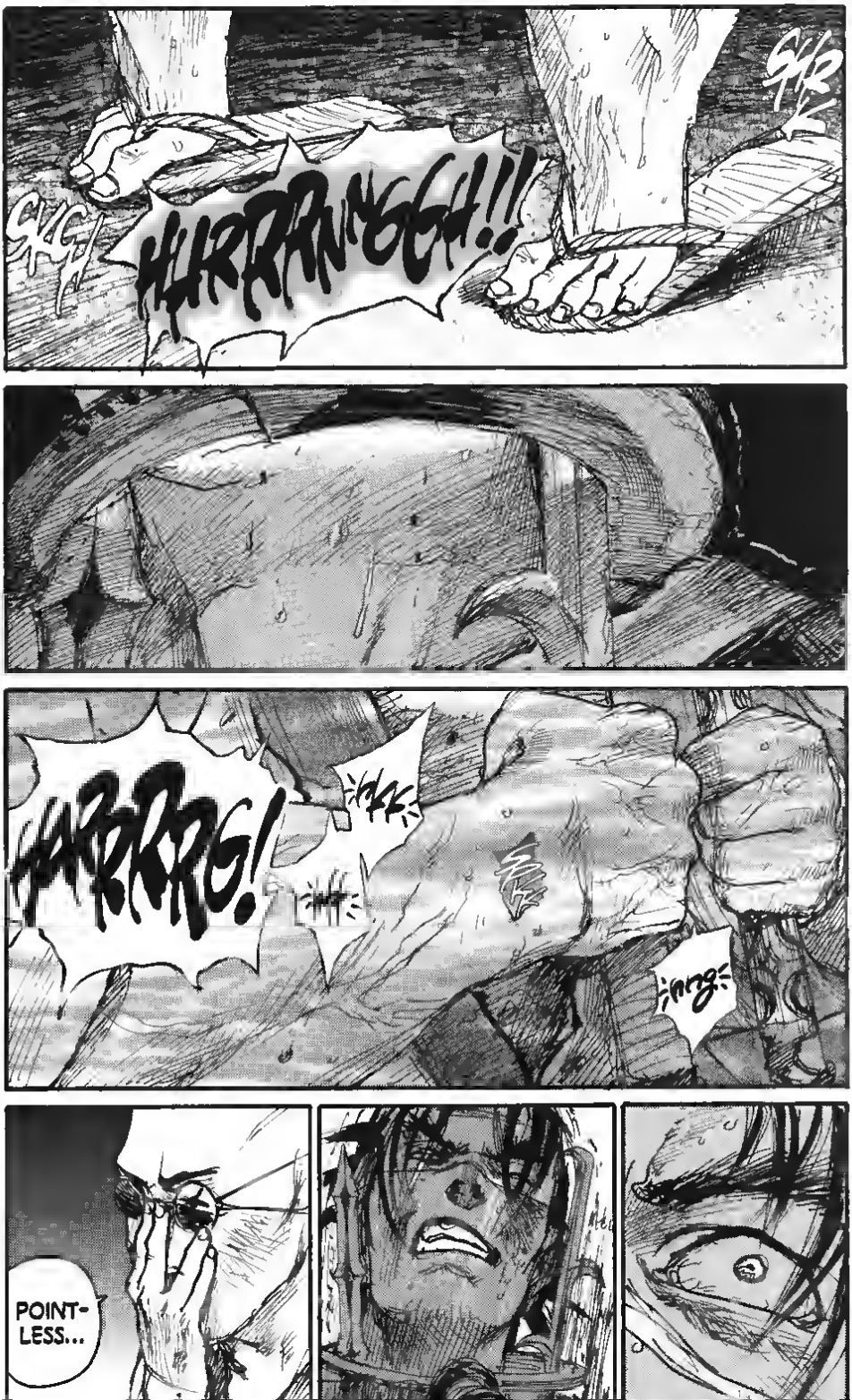
AH...?!
.....
NYEH...

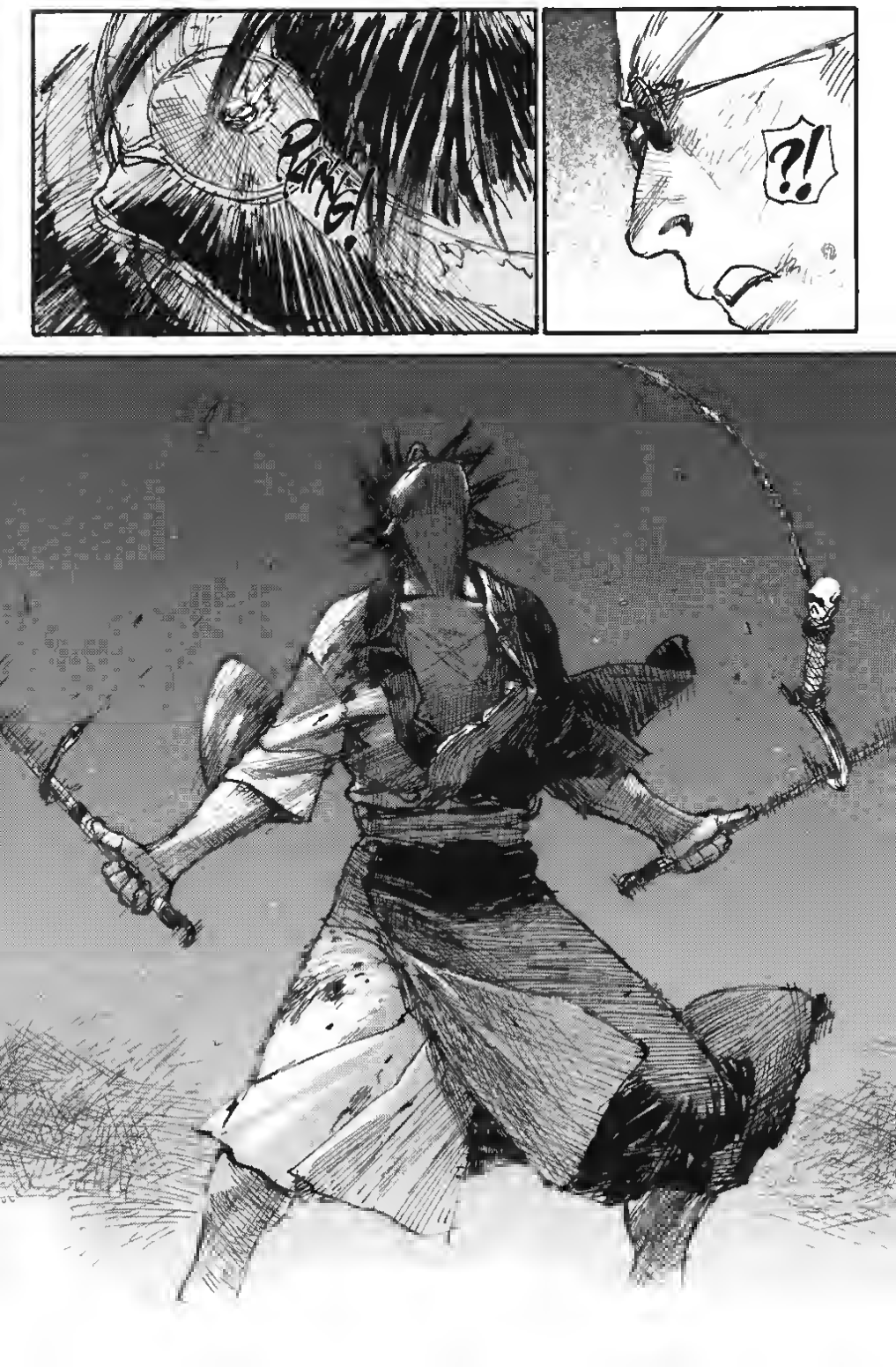
YOU FINALLY *LET GO*, BY GOD.
NO PROBLEM. YOU CAN'T *REMOVE* IT.
THERE'S A *TRICK*.
AH! IS THERE NOW?
SHUCKS. LIKE, *TOO* EFFIN' *BAD*.
I DIDN'T *WANNA* SHOW OFF, BUT...

NGN...!

GYARRR...

.....
.....
BRYAAAH!!!


SKR
SKR
HURRRNGGH!!
HARRRG!
POINT-
LESS...


RANG!
?!

HUFF!
HUFF!
HRRK!
GRAB!
KOFF!
HAHH..!
HUFF
HRRF!
.....
.....

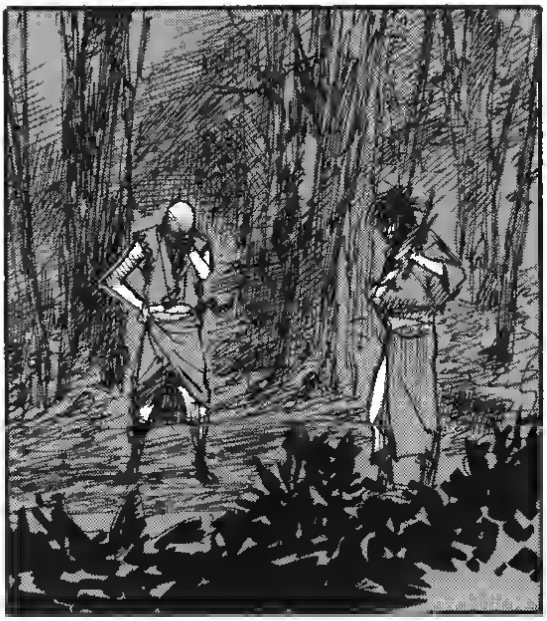
LOOK AT WHAT YOU'VE DONE...
IT'S... USE-LESS NOW.
SORRY 'BOUT THAT.
YOU CAN HAVE ONE OF MINE OVER THERE.
YOU'D BE DOWN WITH THAT, RIGHT?
WE'RE BOTH ABLE. LET'S GO!
.....
.....
NO...

YOU'VE TIRED ME OUT.
ANOTHER DAY. PERHAPS.
SO, LIKE, IF I BUST YOUR ONLY WEAPON...
...IT MEANS I... WIN?
HMM... SEEMS SO...
BWA HAW HAW!

GIICHI!
FINE BY ME! TAKE ME TO YOUR MUGAI-RYŪ BOSSMAN!
DON'T GET ME WRONG. I'M NOT SAYING I'LL JOIN.
I JUST WANNA SEE HIM. THE GUY WHO CAN PUSH YOU AROUND.
YOU'RE INCREDIBLE... YOU PLANNED IT ALL ALONG?
WASTING ALL THIS BLOOD. DELIBERATELY...
HELL...

I WAS
BORED...
NOW I DON'T
NEED TO
BABYSIT...

AH!



TO BE CONTINUED...!

LETTERS

send letters to:

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www.darkhorse.com • blade@darkhorse.com

All fan artwork, letters, and e-mails submitted become the property of Dark Horse Comics

Manji barely dodges a beheading ... and there's no time for him to get bored again, as another hunt begins next issue! From one brawl to another, in kinetic Hiroaki Samura fashion! We'll also see the return of a certain battlefield ... *complication* ... that hasn't arisen since the *Blade of the Immortal: Cry of the Worm* story arc. *Blade of the Immortal* #99 will lead into a DOUBLE-SIZED, slice-for-all, dogfight in *Blade* #100. So, by the time you read this, you'll probably have a week or so to send in some fan art or a letter to contribute to the frenetic *Blade* #100 festivities. As Manji says, "Slice 'em like you see 'em!"

–P.S. **–Philip Simon**

GLOSSARY

dojo: a school for combat and self-defense training in martial arts, here, a training center for swordsmanship.

Ittō-ryū: the radical sword school of Anotsu Kagehisa.

Mugai-ryū: criminals working as assassins for the Shogunate, earning their freedom by killing assigned targets.

ryū: a sword school.

ABOUT THE SWASTIKA

The main character in *Blade of the Immortal*, Manji, has taken the "crux gammata" as both his name and his personal symbol. This symbol is also known as the *swastika*, a name derived from the Sanskrit *svastika* (meaning "welfare," from *su* — "well" + *asti* — "he is"). As a symbol of prosperity and good fortune, the *swastika* was widely used throughout the ancient world (for example, appearing often on Mesopotamian coinage), including North and South America and has been used in Japan as a symbol of Buddhism since ancient times. To be precise, the symbol generally used by Japanese Buddhists is the *sauvastika*, which moves in a counterclockwise direction, and is called the *manji* in Japanese. The *sauvastika* generally stands for night, and often for magical practices. The *swastika*, whose arms point in a clockwise direction, is generally considered a solar symbol. It was this version (the *hakenkreuz*) that was perverted by the Nazis. It is important that readers understand that the *swastika* has ancient and honorable origins, and it is those that apply to this story, which takes place in the 18th century (ca. 1782-3). *There is no anti-Semitic or pro-Nazi meaning behind the use of the symbol in this story. Those meanings did not exist until after 1910.*

ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

The Artwork: The author of *Blade of the Immortal* requested that we make an effort to avoid mirror-imaging his artwork. Normally, all of our manga are first copied in a mirror-image in order to facilitate the left-to-right reading of the pages. However, Mr. Samura decided that he would rather see his pages reversed via the technique of cutting up the panels and repasting them in reverse order. While we feel that this often leads to problems in panel-to-panel continuity, we place primary importance on the wishes of the creator. Therefore, most of *Blade of the Immortal* has been produced using the "cut and paste" technique. There are, of course, some sequences where it was impossible to do this, and mirror-imaged panels or pages were used instead.

The Sound Effects & Dialogue: Since some of Mr. Samura's sound effects are integral parts of the artwork, the decision was made to leave those in their original Japanese. When it was crucial to the understanding of the panel that the sound effect be in English, however, Mr. Samura chose to redraw the panel. We hope readers will view the un-retouched sound effects as essential portions of Mr. Samura's extraordinary artwork. In addition, Mr. Samura's treatment of dialogue is quite different from that featured in average samurai manga and is considered to be one of the things that has made *Blade* such a huge hit in Japan. Mr. Samura has mixed a variety of linguistic styles in this fantasy story, where some characters speak in the mannered style of old Japan, while others speak as if they were street-corner punks from a bad area of modern-day Tokyo. The anachronistic slang used by some of the characters in the English translation reflects the unusual mix of speech patterns from the original Japanese text.

This page recently appeared in Kodansha Ltd.'s *Afternoon* magazine, where *Blade of the Immortal* runs monthly as *Mugen no Junin*. This is a promotional piece for (and interior page from) Hiroaki Samura's *Ohikkoshi* collection. Interested? Tell us if you'd like to see more! Translation by Dana Lewis. Lettering and retouch by Tomoko Saito.

IT'S YOU, HUH? MARRIED A YAKUZA?
...AND YOU ARE...?
FUCK, JUST A SISTER IN CRIME.
OH NO... MAKI...!
BITCH.
ALWAYS GIVING ME THE EVIL EYE. SHE GOT WHAT SHE DESERVED.
LIVE AND LEARN, LITTLE GIRL...
FUNABASHI NATSUMI, SOLITARY...!
FUNABASHI
WHERE'D THIS...?
I, UH... WON IT AT PACHINKO.
NO... NO GOOD A GUY KEEPIN' IT...
THOUGHT MAYBE IT'D BE, UH... PURTY ON YA...

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NEXT MONTH:
Trickster, Part One

Maybe you've read our advertisements or solicitations for this issue already . . . ? Then again, maybe you haven't. No secrets will be given away! We'll see you in thirty days, when *somebody* gets kidnapped, *someone else* is about to be poisoned, and grudges pile up upon grudges. After this month's puzzling resolution, Giichi follows Manji on our immortal warrior's next mission! This first chapter of Hiroaki Samura's "Trickster" slugfest leads into April's DOUBLE-SIZED 100th issue!

WAS
DCP